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United Nations Population Fund

Report of the Ethics Office 2011

Summary

This report is submitted to the Executive Board pursuant to decision 2010/17: Reports of the Ethics Offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, paragraph 9. In accordance with the Secretary-General's bulletin on United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes (ST/SGB/2007/11), the report has been reviewed by the United Nations Ethics Committee at its 35th session on 6 February 2012 and was subsequently provided to the UNFPA Executive Director.

The present report relates to the activities undertaken by the UNFPA Ethics Office during the period 1 January to 31 December 2011. It describes the progression of the ethics function during this period with specific reference to the integration of ethics concepts in organization-wide discourses and initiatives to strengthen accountability and in policies and processes to promote a culture of integrity and compliance in UNFPA.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report and comment on the progress of the work of the UNFPA Ethics Office.

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I. Introduction

1. This report, the fourth since the establishment of the UNFPA Ethics Office in January 2008, has been prepared pursuant to section 5 4 of the Secretary-General's bulletin titled United Nations system-wide application of ethics: separately administered organs and programmes(ST/SGB/2007/11) which requires the ethics offices in the United Nations Secretariat and the separately administered organs and programmes to prepare annual reports for review by the United Nations Ethics Committee (UNEC). The present report is submitted to the Executive Board at its annual session 2012, pursuant to paragraph 9 of Executive Board decision 2010/17: Reports of the Ethics Offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS.

2. The objective of the Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2007/11) is to ensure the consistent application of the highest standards of ethics and integrity within the United Nations thereby enhancing the trust in, and the credibility of, the United Nations, both internally and externally. The UNFPA Ethics Office supports the Executive Director in ensuring that staff conduct is in accordance with the core values and principles of the United Nations and the standards of conduct of the international civil service.

3. The continued commitment of UNFPA to ethics and the ethics function is reflected in paragraph 65 of the report on the midterm review (MTR) of the strategic plan, 2008-2013 (DP/FPA/2011/11), which explicitly states that "staff must uphold the highest standards of professional integrity, continuing the progress that has been made in strengthening the organization's ethical standards". The activities of the UNFPA Ethics Office are intended to contribute to the achievement of output 3 — "Appropriately staffed UNFPA with high-performing professionals fulfilling its mission" — of the management results framework (MRF) of the revised strategic plan, 2008-2013 (see DP/FPA/2011/11).

4. The present report provides an assessment of the activities undertaken by the UNFPA Ethics Office during the period 1 January to 31 December 2011. It describes the progression of the ethics function during the reporting period with a focus on the specific actions taken by the Ethics Office in the context of output 3 of the MRF to support the Executive Director's priority area of focus for 2011 — strengthening organizational accountability.

II. Background and general information

5. The UNFPA Ethics Office aims at promoting an organizational culture that is committed to ethics and in which all staff members observe the highest standards of integrity and professionalism as they strive for excellence in all aspects of their work. The specific functions assigned to the Ethics Office are as follows:

- Administering the UNFPA financial disclosure programme.
- Developing standards, training and education on ethics issues, in coordination with other offices as appropriate, and conducting ethics outreach.
- Undertaking the responsibilities assigned to it under the UNFPA policy for the protection of staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations.

- Providing confidential advice and guidance to staff at their request on ethics-related issues (e.g., conflicts of interest).
- Providing guidance to management on ethics standard-setting to ensure that the rules, policies, procedures and practices of the organization reinforce and promote the highest standards of ethics and integrity required by the Charter of the United Nations, other applicable staff rules and regulations, and the standards of conduct for the international civil service.

6. As an organization, UNFPA is accountable to many different stakeholders — from governments, donors, implementing partners and vendors to its own staff. Its accountability to these stakeholders includes both the delivery of organizational results and the sound stewardship of the financial and human resources entrusted to the organization. The accountability of UNFPA is dependent on the accountability of its staff and management. Staff should be motivated to act ethically at all times, and feel empowered to report unethical behaviour without fear of reprisal. Managers and supervisors by their actions should demonstrate zero tolerance of unethical behaviour and organizational policies and processes should support and encourage ethical decision-making. In 2011, the activities of the UNFPA Ethics Office focused on promoting staff and management commitment to these dimensions of accountability as integral to strengthening organizational accountability.

7. Specifically, during 2011, the training, education and outreach activities of the UNFPA Ethics Office focused on increasing awareness of the correlation between the individual integrity of staff and managers and their adherence to the highest ethical standards on the one hand, and the organization's accountability for the proper management of its resources on the other. Training and learning programmes aimed at equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to promote ethical decision-making and to recognize and avoid situations that could compromise their status as international civil servants. As key elements of organizational accountability, communication materials encouraged staff to speak up against unethical behaviour without fear of retaliation and reinforced management's obligation to take prompt action to address unethical behaviour.

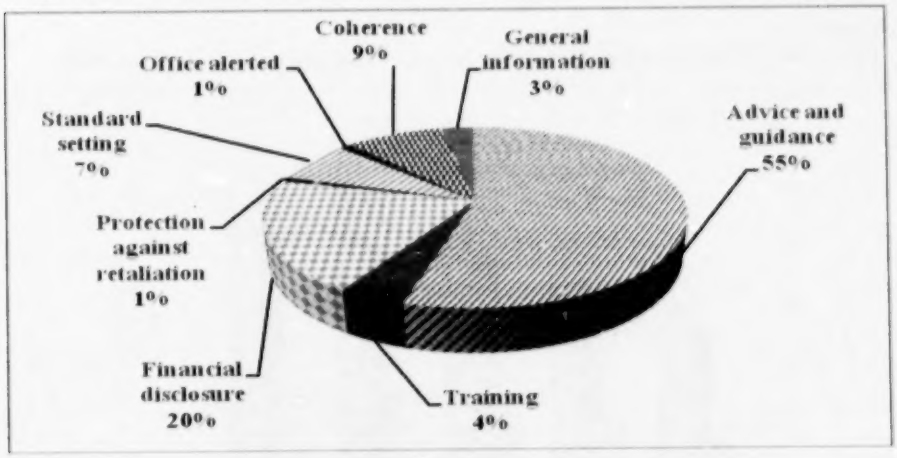
8. Communications on the annual 2011 financial disclosure cycle drew attention to the organization's commitment to strengthening accountability and, in this context, emphasized and reinforced the importance of compliance — with regard to providing the required information and meeting the submission deadline — for the purposes of managing organizational risk and promoting good governance. All staff members who were required to participate in the 2011 filing cycle in accordance with UNFPA financial disclosure guidelines did so and 100 per cent compliance was recorded.

9. The UNFPA Ethics Office continued to provide a secure environment for staff to seek advice and guidance in confidence. The total number of requests for advice and guidance in 2011 (149 inquiries) remained at approximately the same level as in 2010 (144 inquiries). The types of requests for advice and guidance ranged from the permissibility of outside activities and the acceptance of gifts, awards and hospitality, to workplace fairness and respectful workplace conduct. In section III, figures 6 and 7 provide a breakdown of the types of inquiries by issue for 2011 and a comparison of data covering the years 2008-2011, respectively.

10. In consonance with Executive Board decision 2011/24: Reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, wherein the Executive Board "looks forward to the consideration of future annual reports of the ethics offices of the three organizations, pursuant to decision 2010/17, particularly recommendations to management that will strengthen the organizational culture of integrity and compliance" and in response to the recommendation made by the UNFPA Ethics Office, the Fund's senior management expanded the membership of the UNFPA Operations Committee, which is chaired by the two UNFPA Deputy Executive Directors, to include the Ethics Office. The Ethics Office is of the view that doing so has been a critical step in the institutionalization of the ethics function within the organization. The Ethics Office is now able to review all new UNFPA policies, guidelines, rules and regulations and any revisions to existing policies, guidelines, rules and regulations and, where required, provide inputs to ensure conformity with ethical standards, prior to the submission of these documents to the UNFPA Executive Committee for approval. The Ethics Office is also now able to bring to the attention of and formally submit to the Operations Committee proposals to strengthen organizational integrity and compliance.

11. As a result of the training and awareness creation activities of the UNFPA Ethics Office, the progress made in institutionalizing ethics in the organization, and the increase in the visibility and perception of the Ethics Office as an independent and impartial resource for ethics guidance, the Ethics Office has seen an expansion in the number of requests for its services. In 2011, the Ethics Office received a total of 273 requests for its services. As reflected in figure 1, in addition to the services provided in the context of its advisory and guidance function, the services of the Ethics Office were also sought, inter alia, in relation to compliance with the financial disclosure programme, standard-setting and coherence.

Figure 1
Requests for services by category



III. Activities of the Ethics Office

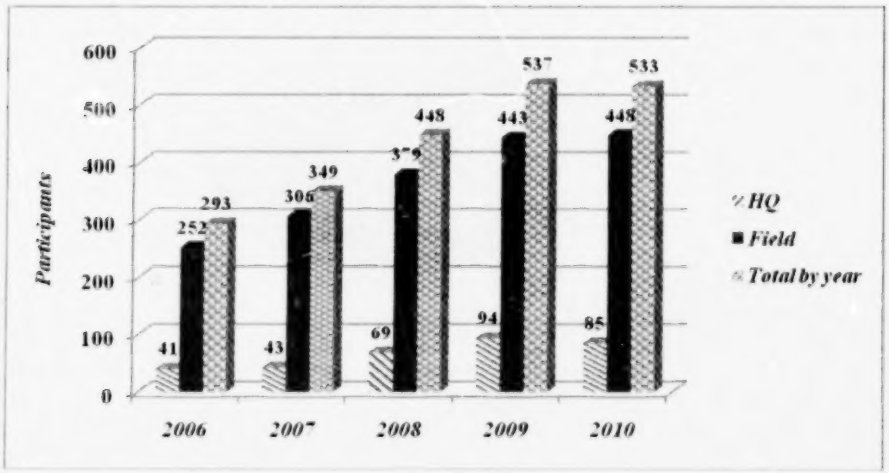
A. Financial disclosure programme

12. One of the key functions of the UNFPA Ethics Office is to administer the financial disclosure programme. The programme is one of the tools for managing organizational risk and is aimed at preserving and protecting the integrity of the organization and the staff members who are required to submit disclosure statements. Since its establishment, the Ethics Office has completed five financial disclosure exercises. Figure 2 illustrates financial disclosure participation by location and calendar year.

13. A total of 533 staff members were identified as being required to file financial disclosure statements in the 2011 filing cycle in respect of the 2010 calendar year. All staff members who were required to participate in the 2011 annual filing cycle complied with their filing obligations. Over 75 per cent met the filing deadline of 31 March 2011 and the rest submitted their statements within two weeks after the submission deadline. In addition, there were 17 new staff members who were identified by the UNFPA Ethics Office as being required to submit initial disclosure statements and who filed outside of the annual filing cycle.

14. The UNFPA Ethics Office is of the view that increased awareness of the purpose of the financial disclosure policy, collaboration with the Division for Human Resources (DHR) and the heads of offices in the identification of staff who are required to file in accordance with the categories specified in the financial disclosure policy, and communication from the Executive Director underscoring the importance of compliance and adherence to the submission deadline in the context of organizational accountability, had a strong impact on the timely submission of financial disclosure statements in the 2011 filing cycle and resulted in 100 per cent compliance.

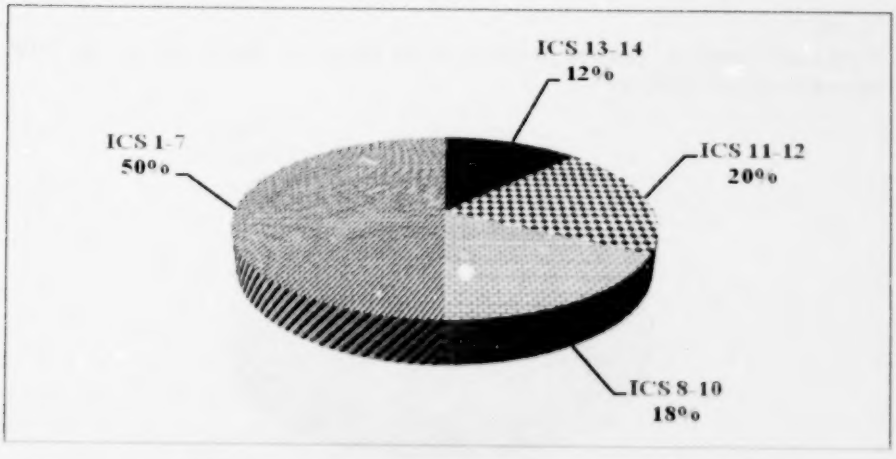
Figure 2
Financial disclosure participation by location and calendar year, 2006-2010



15. The UNFPA financial disclosure policy requires all staff members at the D1/P6 level and above and other designated staff members to file disclosure statements. Staff members included in the financial disclosure programme are those whose functions include decision-making authority for procurement; or whose principal occupational duties relate to the procurement of goods and services, or to the investment of assets or the management of any accounts for which UNFPA has fiduciary or custodial responsibility; or who have direct access to confidential procurement or investment information. Such classification fosters the adoption and application of uniform selection criteria by heads of offices in the identification of staff members from their respective offices who are required to submit financial disclosure statements in each filing cycle. Figure 3 presents the breakdown by International Civil Service (ICS) grade of the 533 staff members who participated in the 2011 filing cycle as follows: ICS 1-7 = 266 staff members; ICS 8-10 = 96 staff members; ICS 11-12 = 105 staff members; and ICS 13-14 = 66 staff members.

Figure 3

Staff required to file financial disclosure statements for the 2010 calendar year by grade



16. As reflected in figure 4, the majority of staff members who submitted disclosure statements in the 2011 filing cycle were field-based. The total number of 448 field staff members, includes regional and subregional Directors and Deputy Directors; UNFPA Representatives, Deputy Representatives, as well as Assistant Representatives serving in duty stations covered by non-resident UNFPA Country Directors; and Operations Managers/Specialists and Finance/Administrative Assistants serving in regional/subregional/country offices. Figure 5 presents the breakdown by category of field staff members who are required to file by location.

Figure 4
Total staff required to file financial disclosure statements for the 2010 calendar year by location

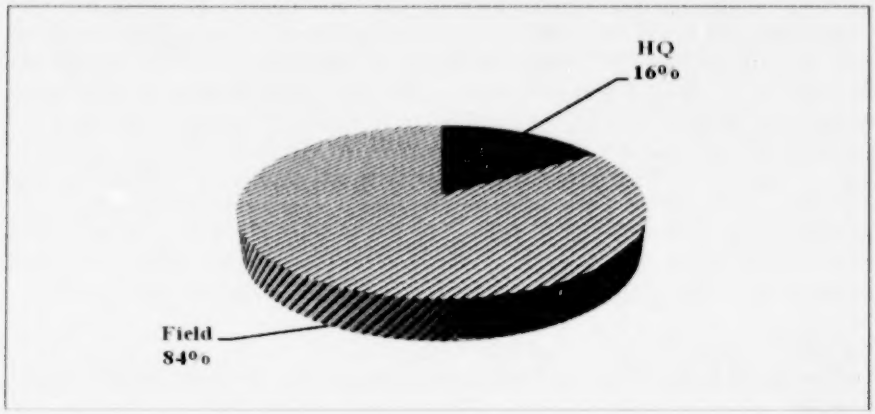
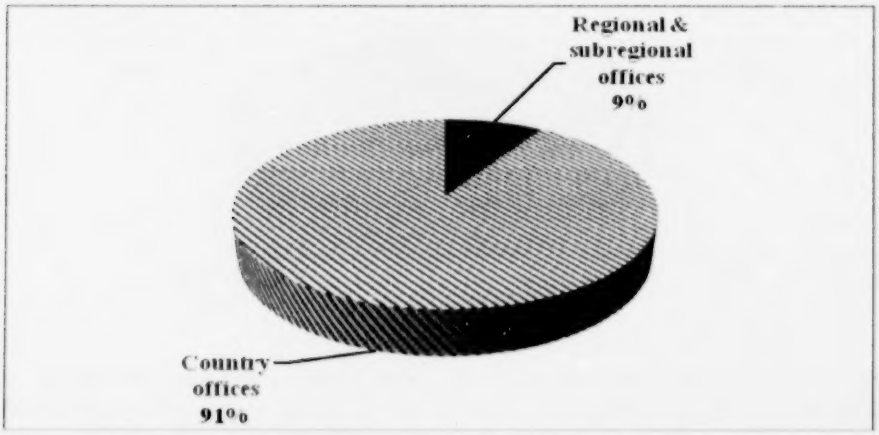


Figure 5
Field staff members required to file financial disclosure statements for the 2010 calendar year by location



17. The financial disclosure form is available through a secure UNFPA Intranet reporting facility and all statements are filed electronically. The online form also provides links to a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs), other information materials related to the financial disclosure programme, and a staff member's previously filed disclosure statements. For the 2011 exercise, extracts from the FAQs related to the types of items (i.e., assets, liabilities and outside affiliations) that were required to be reported were incorporated into the relevant screens of the online financial disclosure form. This feature was intended to serve as a reminder to staff members, at the time of actual completion of each screen, to provide complete and full information on the items required to be reported. The UNFPA Ethics Office is of the view that the addition of this new feature served to minimize the need for repeated follow-up with concerned staff members to secure complete information to

satisfy the requirements of financial disclosure. In respect of the 2011 filing cycle, the Ethics Office followed up with 38 staff members (as opposed to 91 in 2010) for additional information.

18. All financial disclosure statements were reviewed for completeness of information and for the identification of organizational risk, financial or otherwise (i.e., family relationship), which could give rise to an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest situation. The resolutions offered to a staff member in these instances could include making a formal request and securing authorization for participation in an outside activity, resignation from a particular outside activity, divestment of holdings and/or the staff member recusing himself/herself from specified official responsibilities. The review process, in respect of the 2011 filing cycle, identified one staff member whose outside activity had the potential of creating a conflict of interest. The staff member concerned was advised on the actions to be taken in order to remedy the potential conflict.

19. The financial disclosure programme is one of the tools for identifying organizational risks in relation to conflict of interest situations arising from the personal financial investments and/or outside activities of staff members and their spouses and dependent children who are covered under the policy. As such, the financial disclosure form should be designed to elicit information on a range of actual and potential conflict of interest situations that a staff member who is required to file could be faced with. The majority of the ethics offices represented in UNEC, including UNFPA, have been using almost the identical financial disclosure form since the start of their respective financial disclosure programmes. UNEC has begun the process of evaluating the scope of the current financial disclosure forms to ascertain whether they are comprehensive and allow for securing full information on conflicts of interest. Based on the outcome of this review, the UNFPA Ethics Office will, as appropriate, revise the financial disclosure form that is presently being used at UNFPA. The Ethics Office considers this review process as critical for ensuring that the UNFPA financial disclosure programme is a robust tool to manage organizational risk.

B. Training, education and outreach

20. Throughout 2011, the UNFPA Ethics Office maintained the momentum of its training, education and outreach activities. These activities aimed at reinforcing staff and management compliance with the highest ethical standards and individual and collective responsibility for ethical decision-making as being critical to the achievement of organizational accountability. The Ethics Office relied on a range of communication modalities to keep ethics on the 2011 organizational agenda, including face-to-face ethics training and briefing sessions; mandatory online training on ethics; publication of the booklet "Walking the Talk: Ethics in Action at UNFPA"; and use of the Ethics Office website.

21. A total of approximately 425 staff members attended either face-to-face training or a briefing session on ethics in 2011. These sessions were conducted in the context of training programmes organized by the UNFPA Learning and Career Management Branch (LCMB), staff retreats and regional/subregional meetings. These events facilitated open dialogue and discussions on ethics and were opportunities for the participants to have one-on-one interactions with the Ethics

Adviser. They also served as platforms to encourage staff to report misconduct and to raise awareness about the provisions of the protection against retaliation policy. Ethics concepts and ethical practices in the procurement process were included in webinars and in workshops for staff with procurement functions at the country/regional/headquarters levels (including one specifically for the UNFPA Contracts Review Committee) and were conducted by the Procurement Services Branch (PSB).

22. The introductory training course on ethics, which was expanded to include an additional module on conflicts of interest and organizational risk, was a part of two induction workshops on ethics for Junior Professional Officers and National Programme Officers conducted by LCMB and the workshop titled "Management, Ethics and Accountability" organized by the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (EECARO). This additional module reinforces the obligation of staff to act with integrity at all times and to be alert to and avoid situations where their actions could compromise the impartiality and independence of official decision-making. Using examples, the module draws attention to a range of actual, apparent and potential conflict of interest situations that staff members could be faced with either as a result of their own actions (or inaction) or the actions of others; the organizational risks associated with these situations; and the importance of disclosing and resolving such conflicts of interest.

23. The workshop "Management, Ethics and Accountability" organized by EECARO and referred to above also included sessions on supervisory accountability for ethics. The training sessions on supervisory accountability for ethics reinforced the message that the extent to which managers and supervisors demonstrated ethical conduct not only influenced the behaviours of their staff directly, but also shaped the norms and expectations of appropriate conduct that became instilled in the UNFPA ethical culture. These sessions were also conducted for staff from the Programme Division and the Division for Management Services. The Ethics Adviser also briefed the UNFPA Executive Committee on ethical leadership and the obligations of Executive Committee members to ensure that their conduct was always above board and that their actions exemplified the highest ethical standards of conduct at all times.

24. The UNFPA senior managers meeting in December 2011, in Amman, Jordan, which was attended by all UNFPA Representatives and senior staff from headquarters, was an opportunity to reinforce the ethical leadership role expected of managers and supervisors. At this meeting, the topic of ethics and ethical behaviour was introduced by the Executive Director in the context of accountability for results and team performance and as being integral to the implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan. A working group session on ethics was included in the agenda of this meeting and enabled an open discussion on a range of ethics-related issues, the key ethical challenges and organizational risks faced by senior managers and how these could be addressed, and the sensitivities associated with decision-making in these situations. There was consensus that staff and management were accountable for organizational results.

25. Incorporating face-to-face ethics training sessions in training events and meetings organized by LCMB and other organizational units at the regional and headquarters levels and the inclusion of ethics and ethical practices in the curricula of procurement training workshops and webinars organized by PSB, has proved to

be cost-effective, ensured wide participation and contributed to institutionalizing ethics training.

26. The online training course on "Ethics, Integrity and Anti-Fraud: Setting the Standard at UNFPA", which was launched in 2009 and is a collaborative undertaking of LCMB, the Division for Oversight Services (DOS) and the UNFPA Ethics Office, is listed in the UNFPA induction portal which is the first port of call for new staff members. LCMB maintains a database of all those who have completed the course and sends out regular reminders to staff to ensure compliance. The course has also been included in the list of mandatory courses in the UNFPA Performance Appraisal and Development (PAD) system. Consequently, beginning in 2011, staff members are required to certify in their respective PADs that they have completed the ethics online course and supervisors in turn are required to record compliance in the respective year-end reviews of their supervisees. These actions have also contributed to the process of institutionalizing ethics within the organization and expanding the responsibility for the ethics function beyond the Ethics Office.

27. The booklet "Walking the Talk: Ethics in Action at UNFPA", which was issued in 2011, was another undertaking by the UNFPA Ethics Office to reinforce the role of ethics in organizational accountability. The booklet draws on the most common ethics-related issues and concerns brought to the attention of the Ethics Office since its establishment. It aims to increase staff members' sense of right and wrong conduct and acceptance of accountability for their actions, so that they could take appropriate steps to rectify lapses that could compromise their own integrity and that of the organization. The booklet describes a variety of situations/actions that could impinge on the impartiality and independence expected of official decision-making and the organizational processes and procedures that prevent, restrict or manage these situations/actions. The booklet also draws attention to behaviours associated with respectful workplace conduct and the special obligation of managers and supervisors to create work environments that are free of intimidation, personal favouritism and retaliation.

28. The UNFPA Ethics Office continued to maintain an active Intranet website to keep staff informed of the activities of the Ethics Office and the services it offers to staff. The website is a key communication tool to facilitate continuous ethics education throughout a staff member's career. The website provides easy access to all ethics-related guidelines, policies and procedures; the mandatory online ethics course (English, French and Spanish versions); case studies on ethical decision-making and training materials. The website also includes quizzes and scenarios of various ethics-related situations that staff can be faced with in their daily work together with guidance on appropriate responses. The protection against retaliation intake form is posted on the website. The form guides staff on the type of information required to support a formal complaint of retaliation that is made to the Ethics Office pursuant to the UNFPA policy on "Protection against Retaliation for Reporting Misconduct or for Cooperating with Duly Authorized Audits or Investigations".

C. Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized fact-finding activities

29. The objective of the UNFPA policy on protection against retaliation is to encourage and empower staff members to speak up against acts of misconduct and to participate in duly authorized fact-finding activities such as audits, evaluations, investigations, inspections or management reviews without fear of retaliation. "Retaliation" within the context of this policy means any direct or indirect detrimental action recommended, threatened or taken because an individual reported misconduct in good faith or cooperated with an authorized fact-finding activity. When established, retaliation is by itself misconduct. The policy is a mechanism to enhance good corporate governance and to ensure that the organization functions in a transparent and accountable manner.

30. One of the key functions of the UNFPA Ethics Office is to administer the protection against retaliation policy. When the Ethics Office receives a complaint of retaliation pursuant to the policy, it makes an initial assessment that can lead to a determination that the situation warrants preliminary review. If the circumstances warrant a preliminary review then the Ethics Office will determine if the complainant engaged in a "protected activity", i.e., reported in good faith a misconduct or participated in a duly authorized fact-finding activity and, if so, whether the protected activity contributed to the alleged retaliation or threat of retaliation. If after preliminary review the Ethics Office determines that there is a prima facie case of retaliation or threat of retaliation then the matter is referred to DOS or an alternative investigating body, if required, for a formal investigation and the burden of proof shifts to the organization, requiring management to show that it would have taken the same action against the complainant, absent the protected activity. Pending the completion of the formal investigation, the Ethics Office could propose to the Executive Director interim measures to safeguard the interests of the complainant.

31. In 2011, two staff members consulted the UNFPA Ethics Office on the provisions of the protection against retaliation policy. Both staff members had reported misconduct and requested guidance from the Ethics Office on the scope and applicability of the protection policy. The Ethics Office informed the staff members of the informal and formal mechanisms to report retaliation in accordance with the policy. Both staff members opted to contact the Office of the Ombudsman for the United Nations funds and programmes (UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/UNOPS) with regard to their respective cases.

32. As mentioned above, the UNFPA Ethics Office uses the opportunity of its training and communication activities to encourage staff to report misconduct and to increase awareness of the provisions of the protection against retaliation policy. This complements the functions of DOS which emphasize the "duty" of staff to report misconduct.

D. Advice and guidance

33. The provision of timely responses to individual requests for advice and guidance contributes to ensuring ethical conduct and preserving the integrity of the organization. In 2011, the UNFPA Ethics Office responded to 149 individual

inquiries for advice and guidance on a range of ethics-related issues and concerns. The increase in the number of inquiries highlights the critical role of the advice and guidance function and also reflects the trust placed in the Ethics Office: 35 in 2008; 102 in 2009; 144 in 2010; and 149 in 2011. Figure 6 provides a breakdown of the requests for ethics advice by issue in 2011. Figure 7 provides a comparison between the volume and types of requests received in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Figure 6
Requests for ethics advice by issue in 2011

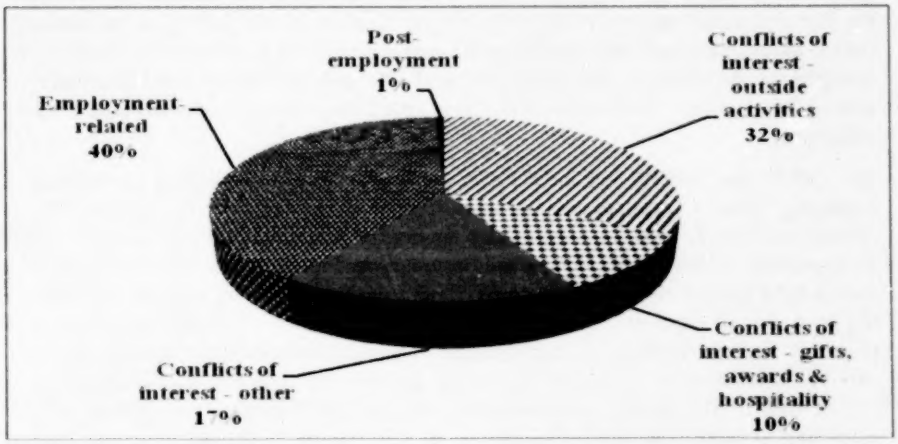
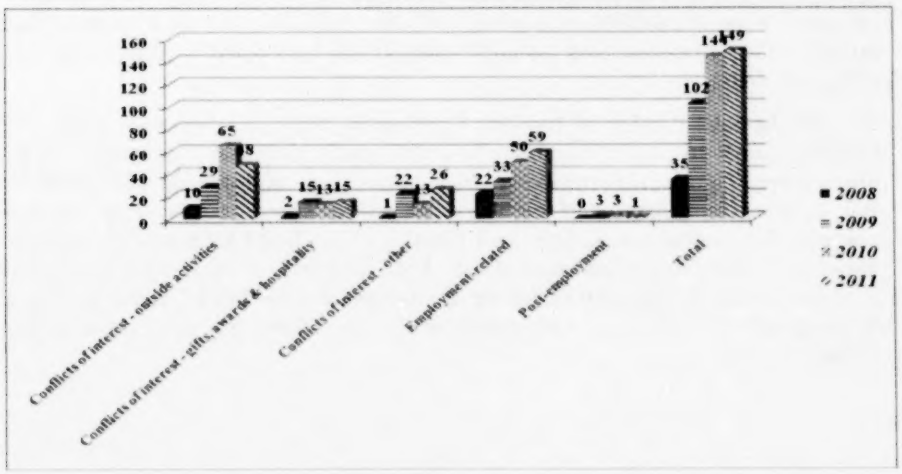

Post-employment 1%
Conflicts of interest - outside activities 32%
Employment-related 40%
Conflicts of interest - gifts, awards & hospitality 10%
Conflicts of interest - other 17%

Figure 7
Requests for ethics advice: Comparison of 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 data



34. As was the case in previous years, in 2011, the majority of requests (59 per cent) for advice and guidance fell under the category "conflicts of interest". Of the 89 inquiries on conflicts of interest received in 2011, 48 inquiries were related to participation in outside activities such as board memberships in a variety of not-for-profit organizations, participation in expert group meetings and panels, submission

of articles to magazines and journals, and teaching assignments; 15 inquiries pertained to the receipt of gifts, awards and hospitality; and 26 inquiries related to other conflict of interest situations. The UNFPA Ethics Office is of the view that the guidance it provided served to prevent, mitigate and resolve actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest.

35. Employment-related inquiries, totalling 59, constituted 40 per cent of the total number of requests for advice and guidance in 2011. This number represents an 18 per cent increase from the number recorded in this category in 2010. The nature and type of inquiries in this category could be classified into: (a) concerns with regard to the fair and equal treatment of staff; (b) clarification of the policy on harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority and the policies relating to accountability, disciplinary procedures and measures, and due process following allegations of misconduct; and (c) communication styles and behaviours that undermined respect and dignity.

36. While the UNFPA Ethics Office is not responsible for resolving grievances or replacing existing mechanisms for reporting and/or investigating misconduct, it advises staff on ethical standards and behaviours. The Ethics Office can assist staff in providing information on relevant policies and procedures and other entities within UNFPA and the United Nations system in order to assist staff in deciding on the processes or entities best suited to address their concerns. The Ethics Office is of the view that the increase in the number of employment-related inquiries in 2011 can be attributed to the trust placed in the Ethics Office and, furthermore, a recognition of its ability and willingness to provide impartial clarification of the rules and standards of the organization. In this regard, it should be noted that in some of the situations referred to in paragraph 35 above, it appeared that those who approached the Ethics Office were aware that the Ethics Office was not the appropriate unit for the resolution of the issues raised, yet they sought to voice their concerns to the Ethics Office. In other instances, the concerned staff members had informed the appropriate and assigned entities, and also opted to keep the Ethics Office informed.

37. Of the total number of requests received in 2011, 73 were from field staff members and 76 were from headquarters staff members, including senior management (figure 8). Furthermore, 78 inquiries were from female staff members and 71 were from male staff members (figure 9). The provision of advice and guidance is a critical risk management function of the UNFPA Ethics Office and is integral to minimizing organizational risk. Also, the types of requests for advice and guidance, serve as a basis for designing new communication initiatives (as described in paragraph 27), which in turn reinforce the preventive function of the Ethics Office.

Figure 8
Requests for ethics advice: Breakdown by location

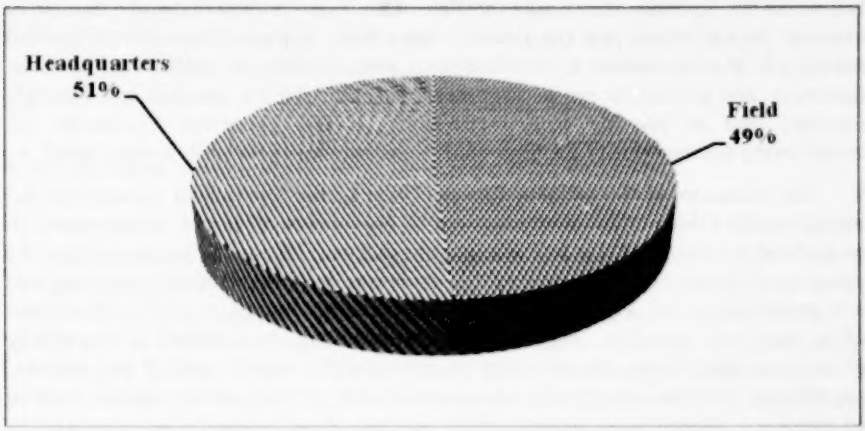
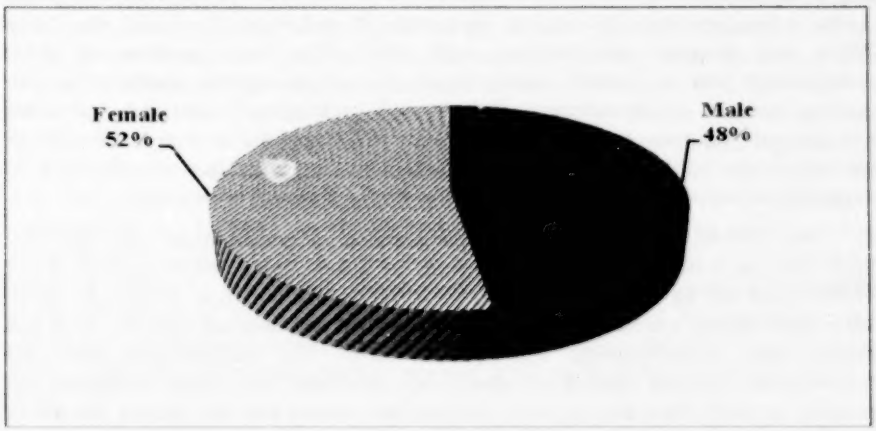


Figure 9
Requests for ethics advice: Breakdown by gender



E. Standard-setting and policy support

38. Advocacy for ethics standard-setting and providing guidance to management on the incorporation of these standards in organizational practices and processes is a key function of the UNFPA Ethics Office. Management's visible commitment to undertake oversight responsibility for the inclusion of ethics concepts, as appropriate, in organizational policies, encourages line managers responsible for drafting UNFPA guidelines, rules and regulations to pay due attention to these concepts during policy formulation and influences staff at large to be mindful of ethical considerations in their interactions with external stakeholders and within UNFPA when implementing these policies.

39. In July 2011, upon the recommendation of the UNFPA Ethics Office, the Fund's senior management expanded the membership of the UNFPA Operations Committee to include the Ethics Office. The two UNFPA Deputy Executive Directors jointly chair the Operations Committee. Included among the several functions of the Operations Committee is its responsibility to ensure that policies, procedures and guidelines are in alignment with the UNFPA mandate and strategic direction; and to provide recommendations to the Executive Committee on strengthening accountability for high-quality programming and risk management.

40. The inclusion of the UNFPA Ethics Office in the Operations Committee has formalized the Ethics Office's engagement in organizational policy development. It has enabled the Ethics Office to participate in and provide inputs, as required, in the inclusion of ethics concepts in new (or revisions to) organizational policies that were presented to the Operations Committee. In this regard, in 2011, the Ethics Office provided inputs in respect of the policies that are related to emergency procurement procedures; the awarding of grants under country, global and regional programmes; and the receipt of in-kind goods and services from external entities and proposed measures to prevent and/or manage possible conflicts of interest in these situations.

41. In view of the nature of the inquiries in the category "employment-related issues" addressed to the UNFPA Ethics Office in connection with its advisory and guidance function (and referred to in paragraphs 35 and 36 of this report), the Ethics Office had frequent consultations with DHR. The main purpose of these consultations was to identify measures to enforce managerial compliance with existing policies on recruitment/selection and performance appraisal and other policies and processes that promoted the fair and respectful treatment of staff. In this regard, the Ethics Office worked with DHR in the preparation of a directive on respectful workplace conduct that was issued by the Executive Director.

42. The UNFPA Ethics Office also participated in consultations and provided inputs in connection with the development of a new competency framework for UNFPA staff led by DHR. The competency framework which is in the process of being finalized has a strong focus on behaviours that demonstrate integrity, trust and respect, and accountability. The Ethics Office also collaborated with the Procurement Services Branch in identifying processes that could safeguard the integrity of staff when dealing with vendors and ensure that the actions did not in any way compromise the reputation of the organization.

IV. United Nations Ethics Committee and Ethics Network

43. The UNFPA Ethics Office participated in all nine UNEC meetings in 2011. UNEC continues to be an excellent forum for the sharing of experiences and learning. The engagement with UNEC has been very useful whether it be consulting on new and emerging ethics-related issues; participating in discussions on harmonization of the protection policy; reviewing the financial disclosure programmes; developing a framework to ensure adherence to a consistent methodology when responding to requests for ethics advice and guidance; or identifying areas for collaboration in the design and development of new training initiatives.

44. The UNFPA Ethics Office also participated in the annual meeting of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations and was actively engaged in the preparation of the agenda for this meeting. Further information on the work of UNEC and the Ethics Network is provided in the Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the Ethics Office (A/66/319) presented at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

V. Conclusion

45. In 2011, the UNFPA Ethics Office intensified its efforts towards institutionalizing ethics in the organization. It successfully advocated for the integration of ethics and integrity concepts in organization-wide discourses and initiatives to strengthen accountability and for the establishment of mechanisms that would enable the formal and explicit inclusion of ethics concepts in organizational policies and practices. The aforementioned have been definite milestones in the progression of the work of the Ethics Office and have contributed to its increased visibility and the use of its services by staff and management.

46. At the same time, in order to ensure that ethics is a part of the daily work and practices of all organizational units and included in decision-making at all levels of the organization, heads of offices at country/regional/headquarters levels need to be more actively engaged in promoting a culture of ethics in their respective offices. While several heads of offices have indeed set aside time for ethics learning in their respective offices in 2011, and have initiated regular discussions with their staff on ethical conduct, from feedback received by the UNFPA Ethics Office, it would appear that this is not being done systematically across the board. Against this background, the consensus reached at the UNFPA senior managers meeting — that staff and management are accountable for organizational results — is particularly important as it reinforces (a) the obligation of all staff members, irrespective of grade levels, to adhere to the highest ethical standards; and (b) the responsibility of heads of offices to proactively monitor adherence to these standards. Supporting heads of offices in their endeavours to inculcate ethics in the workplace and advocating for further mechanisms and processes to support the institutionalizing of ethics within the organization will be priority areas of work for the Ethics Office in 2012.